

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. George C. Blanchard, District I Mr. Thomas S. Crumpton, Jr., District II
Mr. Mario Suarez, District III Mr. Marion E. Lyles, District IV
Mr. H. Frank Ables, Jr., District V

MINUTES, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

The Oconee County Council met Tuesday, January 2, 2007 at 3:00 pm in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members and Mr. Norton, County Attorney, present.

Press:

Members of the press notified (via mail): Keowee Courier, Westminster News, Daily Journal, Anderson Independent, WGOG Radio, WYFF TV, WLOS TV, & WSNW Radio.

Members of the press present: Brett McLaughlin – Daily Journal, Dave Williams – Anderson Independent, Kisha Foster – WYFF TV & Ashton Hester – Keowee Courier.

Other Organizations Notified:

Also notified were the Oconee County Tax Payers Association, Citizens for Recreation Center and the Oconee County Democratic Party.

Call to Order:

County Attorney Norton called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Mr. Norton led the pledge of allegiance to the US Flag.

Minutes:

Mr. Ables made a motion, seconded by Mr. Crumpton, approved 3 – 0 (Mr. Blanchard & Mr. Suarez abstaining) that the minutes of the regular meeting held December 5, 2006 be adopted as printed.

Public Comment Session:

Chief John Wise Bull Hilton addressed Council regarding the proposed development at Keowee Towne Landing and asked to be notified of any development involving Native American issues.

Public Comment Session Continued:

Mr. Francis X. Maloney congratulated Council Members Blanchard & Suarez on their election and addressed Council regarding the County budget, growth in the County, zoning and agricultural tax use.

Mr. Larry Linson congratulated Council Members Blanchard & Suarez and addressed Council regarding expenditures of County funds.

Mr. Charles Cantrell addressed Council in support of prayer at Council Meetings.

Mr. George Cleveland addressed Council regarding prayer and welcomed Mr. Blanchard & Mr. Suarez to Council.

Mr. Michael Deanhardt addressed Council regarding separation of Church & State and against prayer before the beginning of Council Meetings.

Mr. B. J. Littleton addressed Council regarding no new taxes, the ACLU, having no prayer at Council Meetings, no pledge to the flag and he further informed Council he cherishes his freedoms.

Election of Council Chair:

Mr. Ables made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 4 – 0 (Mr. Lyles abstaining) that Mr. Lyles be elected as Council Chair.

Election of Vice Chair:

Mr. Lyles made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 4 – 0 (Mr. Crumpton abstaining) that Mr. Crumpton be elected as Council Vice Chair.

Election of Chair Pro Tem:

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ables, approved 4 – 0 (Mr. Blanchard abstaining) that Mr. Blanchard be elected as Council Chair Pro Tem:

Appointment of Clerk to Council:

Mr. Lyles made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ables, approved 5 – 0 that Mrs. Opal O. Green be appointed as the Clerk to Council.

Appointment of County Attorney:

Mr. Lyles made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ables, approved 5 – 0 that Mr. Bradley A. Norton be appointed as County Attorney.

Appointment of Council Committees:

Mr. Lyles, Council Chair, made the following Council Committee appointments:

Budget, Finance & Administration:

H. Frank Ables, Jr., District V, Chair
George C. Blanchard, District I
Thomas S. Crumpton, Jr., District II
Mario Suarez, District III
Marion E. Lyles, District IV

Road & Transportation:

Thomas S. Crumpton, Jr., District II, Chair
Mario Suarez, District III
Marion E. Lyles, District IV

Real Estate, Facilities & Land Management:

Marion E. Lyles, District IV, Chair
George C. Blanchard, District I
Thomas C. Crumpton, Jr., District II

Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare:

George C. Blanchard, District I, Chair
Thomas S. Crumpton, Jr., District II
H. Frank Ables, Jr., District V

Planning & Economic Development:

Mario Suarez, District III, Chair
George C. Blanchard, District I
H. Frank Ables, Jr., District V

South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments Representative:

Mr. Lyles will remain as the Council Representative on the South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments Board until March at which time Mr. Crumpton will begin serving as Oconee County's representative.

Oconee Memorial Hospital Representative:

Mr. Lyles appointed Mr. Ables as Council's representative to the Oconee Memorial Hospital Board

Council Meeting Dates:

Mr. Crumpton made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ables, approved 3 – 2 (Mr. Blanchard & Mr. Suarez voting against) that the meeting dates and times remain as they presently are – 1st Tuesday at 3:00 pm and 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 pm in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC.

Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, Inc. Agreement:

Mr. Ables made a motion, seconded by Mr. Crumpton, approved 5 – 0 that the attached agreement by and between Oconee County and Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, Inc. whereby Oconee County will receive \$256,000 from Blue Ridge Electric for infrastructure in the industrial park in the southern part of the County be ratified.

Generator for Toccoa Falls Site:

Mr. Crumpton made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ables, approved 5 – 0 that a request to purchase a generator from Atlantic South Power Generation Systems, L.L.C. at a cost of \$35,000 for the Toccoa Falls College radio site be adopted.

Ordinance 2007-01:

Mr. Blanchard made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ables, approved 5 – 0 that Ordinance 2007-01, "AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF A NOT EXCEEDING ONE MILLION TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLAR (\$1,200,000) OCONEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND (KEOWEE FIRE TAX DISTRICT PROJECT), SERIES 2007; TO PRESCRIBE THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THE PROCEEDS SHALL BE EXPENDED; TO PROVIDE FOR THE PAYMENT THEREOF; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO" be adopted on first reading.

Council Committee Reports:

There were no Council Committee reports.

Administrator Report:

Upon recommendation of Mr. Hendricks, the proposed Native American cultural center to be placed at Keowee Towne Landing was referred to the Arts & Historical Commission for a recommendation to Council.

Mr. Hendricks also informed Council they would be receiving the costs to rehabilitate the building purchased to house the Department of Social Services in February.

Mr. Brent Robertson, Merchant's Capital, L.L.C., Financial Advisor to the County presented the attached report to Council:

Bond Levy to include the School District for 2004-05 was 205 mills; 2005-06 – 216.6 mills and 2006-07 – 204 mills.

Duke Energy continues to be a large tax payer in Oconee County paying \$34,160,698 in 2005.

The County fund balance was at a low in 2002, but began to go up in 2003 and continues to go up in 2005.

The undesignated fund balance provides coverage for the County's working capital needs for approximately 99.83 days.

Oconee County has lost many jobs since 2001, but signs of recovery are promising.

During 2001-2005 Oconee County experienced almost \$200,000,000 in capital investment.

During 2006 the following investments were made in Oconee County:

- Timken US Corporation: - \$18,000,000 – estimated 200 jobs
- Valenite: - \$65,000,000 over past two years – 50 jobs
- TYCO/Kendall: - \$ 5,100,000
- Square D: - estimated 100 jobs in 2006 & 2007
- Oconee Mem. Hospital: - \$44,800,000 – 50 jobs in 2006 & 2007

Administrator's Report Continued:

The largest employers in Oconee County, excluding new jobs to be created for Timken Us Corporation and Oconee Memorial Hospital are:

School District of Oconee County:	1,605 employees
Duke Energy:	1,400 employees
Oconee Memorial Hospital:	1,308 employees
Itron:	715 employees
Square D:	593 employees
Oconee County:	434 employees
Kendall:	395 employees
Timken US Corporation:	360 employees
Engelhard Corporation:	332 employees
Borg Warner:	330 employees

The County population grew 15.2% between 1990 and 2000.

The average household income in 2005 was \$52,162.

In 2000 there were 434 building permits issued, in 2005 there were 831 building permits issued and from July – November 2006, there were 264 building permits issued.

Gross retail sales went from \$489,647,482 in 1991 to \$1,142,000,000 in 2005.

The FY 2005 assessed value of real and personal property is \$352,460,067; debt limitation = 8% of \$352,460,067 = \$28,196,805; the total general obligation debt outstanding is \$11,010,000 and the remaining debt capacity is \$17,186,805. (See attached presentation)

Mr. Hendricks also presented Council with a total of expenditures of County funding by function:

Administration: 4%; General Government: 14%; Public Works: 20%; Solid Waste: 10%; Judicial Services: 6%; Public Safety: 28%; Taxation: 5%; Community Services: 6%; State Services 1%; Aid to Cities: 3%, Direct Aid: 1% and Airport: 2%. (See attached presentation)

I-85 Widening:

Mr. Ables requested the Clerk to draft a letter for Council's signature requesting the local and state Delegation Members seek funding for the widening of I-85 since our neighboring state of Georgia is widening this highway.

Grants:

Mr. Ables also requested that the County Administrator ask the County Grants Coordinator to secure grant funding for economic development in the County.

Council Work Session:

Chairman Lyles stated there would be a Council work session Monday, January 8, 2007 at 10:00 am for the purpose of discussing the prayer issue and the County Administrator position.

Executive Session:

Mr. Ables made a motion, seconded by Mr. Crumpton, approved 5 – 0 that Council go into executive session for the purpose of discussing a contractual matter, a litigation matter and receipt of legal advice subject to attorney/client privilege.

Open Session:

When open session resumed, there was no action regarding the executive session.

Board & Commission Appointment:

Mr. Ables made a motion, seconded by Mr. Crumpton, approved 5 – 0 that Mr. Henry Richardson be appointed to represent District V on the Arts & Historical Commission.

Adjourn:

Adjourn: 5:20 pm

Respectfully Submitted:

Opal O. Green,
Clerk to Council